

Romantic Paradises: The Rôle of the Garden in the Byzantine Romance*

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Ekphraseis of gardens¹ occur in only two of the five extant classical romances, those of Achilles Tatios and of Longos,² but in Byzantine romances they are almost *de rigueur*:³ indeed of the only three⁴ that eschew the theme two, *Phlorios and Platziaphlore* and *Imberios and Margarona*, are basically Frankish rather than Byzantine while the third, Theodore Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and*

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1. They are variously termed κήπος, λειμών, λιβάδι, ὄρχατος, παράδεισος, περιβόλι, but in all instances the description of the contents belongs to the same tradition. In all but one instance (see below, p. 107) λειμών refers not to an open but to an enclosed garden-like meadow.

2. If this indeed be the name of the author of *Daphnis and Chloë* (see G. Dalmeyda, *Longos: Pastorales (Daphnis et Chloë)* 2nd ed. [Paris, 1960], pp. xif.).

3. References to all the ekphraseis may be found in the appendix. Those in the romantic epics, Nonnos' *Dionysiaka*, Basil Digenis Akritas and the *Byzantine Achilleis*, are included, but that of Meliteniotes' *Sophrosyne*, a singularly unromantic work, is omitted from the series, since, although the actual description of the garden is in the tradition, the purpose of the whole work is alien to that of the others.

4. It is not known whether or not the now fragmentary romance of Constantine Manasses contained an ekphrasis of a garden (for a possible clue see below, pp. 112f.).

Dosikles, closely follows Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*, a classical⁵ romance that does not contain a description of a garden. Ekphraseis, except for those in Longos,⁶ are generally considered an intrusive element pandering to a popular taste for pretty and even exotic but none the less irrelevant details.⁷ I wish to suggest, however, that despite their frequently derivatory and perhaps even on occasion mechanically imitative content⁸ ekphraseis of gardens are an integral part of the love-romance with an important psychological rôle to play.

As far as we can fathom the workings of his mind, primitive man associated or even identified a notable feature of his landscape, such as a crag, a spring or a wood, with a divinity, and did likewise with notable features of his emotional and his mental life. He then seems to have made an unconscious analogy between natural features and his emotions or concepts, his later 'nascent rationality . . . strengthening rather than opposing such instinctive associations'.⁹ In this way his divinities coalesced and natural features became invested with powers relevant to man. Gradually the associations that appeared to have the most rational basis became the most dominant: thus trees and flowers, which reproduce, water,

5. Heliodoros was once believed to be a Byzantine bishop (and so still D. M. Nicol, 'in the fifth century Heliodorus, Bishop of Trikkala, made a name for himself as the first Christian to write a love story', *Meteora*, rev. ed. [London 1975], p. 47) on the basis of Sokrates, *Eccl. Hist.* 5.22, but he is now generally stripped of rank and religion (Achilleus Tatios also was once thus elevated). His date is third or, more likely, fourth century (see R. Keydell, 'Zur Datierung der *Aithiopika* Heliodors', in *Polychronion: Festschrift Fr. Dölger*, ed. P. Wirth [Heidelberg, 1966], pp. 345–50).

6. See in particular, H. H. O. Chalk, 'Eros and the Lesbian Pastorals of Longus', *JHS*, LXXX (1960), 32–51 and W. E. Forehand, 'Symbolic Gardens in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*', *Eranos*, LXXIV (1976), 103–12.

7. Despite the traditional contumely for especially the learned Byzantine romance there is recent evidence for a more sensitive and sympathetic understanding of these works in which even the ekphrasis is partly rehabilitated (see M. Alexiou, 'A Critical Reappraisal of Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*', *BMGS*, III [1977], 24).

8. The development of the tradition of the ekphrasis and the influence upon it of rhetorical theory were extensively explored by O. Schissel, *Der byzantinische Garten* [Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Phil.-hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte 221.2, 1942].

9. P. Piehler, *The Visionary Landscape: a Study in Medieval Allegory* (Montreal, 1971), p. 71.

which irrigates and gives life, and wind, which carries seeds and was widely held to be a fertilizing principle, all became sexual powers, or at a later stage, in the face of the growing sophistication of anthropomorphic theology, were at least deemed conducive towards love, while a barren landscape with stony mountain slope had the reverse effect. Such elements have always been used by poets, in both prose and verse, either unconsciously as background to their subject-matter or consciously as symbols.¹⁰ As C. S. Lewis says of the machinery of allegory, it 'may . . . be regarded as a system of conduit pipes which thus tap the deep, unfailing sources of poetry in the mind of the folk and convey their refreshment to lips which could not otherwise have found it'.¹¹ Thus a literary description of a garden, in itself unnecessary to the plot or argument, is not unlikely to be invested with erotic undertones; and here it seems significant, that, although love is the motivating force in all five classical romances, it earns but perfunctory attention in three – the exceptions are those of Achilleus Tatios and Longos, the only two that, as has been noted, do contain ekphraseis of gardens (and, indeed, both enjoy separate descriptions of two different gardens). This may be a coincidence, but the insistent appearance of a garden in the Byzantine love-romances suggests that it is not.

Frequently the garden is the scene for erotic action: seven gardens are used for love-making¹² and one, chronologically the first in the series, for rape;¹³ in four the hero receives the divine commandment that he is to fall in love with the heroine;¹⁴ in one the heroine is similarly charged;¹⁵ in one the lovers receive a prophecy of their future.¹⁶ Seven gardens belong to or

10. The outstanding example is the Ninth Similitude of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, wherein twelve spiritual states are allegorized by the different topographies of twelve mountains.

11. *The Allegory of Love: a Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford, 1936), p. 120.

12. Achilleus Tatios II, *Digenis Akritas* I, II, Eustathios Makrembolites, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* III, *Belthandros and Chrysantza* II, *Byzantine Achilleis* (Roman numerals refer to those given in the Appendix). In the first of these love-making is restricted to an erotic discourse sympathetically received.

13. Achilleus Tatios I.

14. Eustathios Makrembolites, *Belthandros and Chrysantza* I, *Libistros and Rhodamne* I, II.

15. *Byzantine Achilleis*.

16. *Libistros and Rhodamne* III.

are otherwise connected with Eros,¹⁷ and two are sacred to Dionysos¹⁸ (more detailed analyses of the contexts may be found in the Appendix). The wording often has erotic undertones or suggests sexual analogies¹⁹ so that no single standard element in these ekphraseis (wall,²⁰ trees, flowers, wind, water, art-work) can ever be completely cleared of suspicion. Even the less commonly occurring birds, a quite natural adornment to any description of a garden, may be made to behave amorously, and when they do not it should still be borne in mind that birds as a symbol of fertility figure in the Byzantine painter's and mosaicist's iconography of the Annunciation to St. Anne in accordance with the text of the *Protevangelium* or *Gospel of James*.²¹

More interestingly the gardens show a much closer connexion with the heroine than with the hero. All the romances, with the exceptions of *Daphnis and Chloë* and *Digenis Akritas*, which are both *sui generis*, possess a garden (or gardens) belonging to the house or castle in which she lives²² or is imprisoned (or, in the case of Niketas' homeless heroine, temporally serving in lieu of an abode). Moreover, the garden is usually described upon or very close to our, and the hero's, first acquaintance with the heroine, while her formal ekphrasis tends to follow the garden's,²³ the link between them being emphasized by interlocking imagery. An interesting situation is afforded by *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhōē* since hero discovers heroine in pitiable plight suspended by her hair: she must necessarily wait for him to slay the dragon, hear his tale, tell hers, improve her appearance (although he was captivated from the first) and generally recover before she can enjoy the formal ekphrasis of

17. Longos I, Eustathios Makrembolites, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhōē* III, *Belthandros and Chrysantza* I, *Libistros and Rhodamne* I, II, *Byzantine Achilleis*.

18. Longos II, Niketas Eugenianos.

19. See below, pp. 100–7.

20. For the important rôle of the wall see below, p. 107.

21. 3.1–2. A splendid example occurs in the cycle of the Life of the Virgin in the narthex of Kariye Djami (P. A. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, II [Bollingen Series no. LXX, New York, 1966], plates 92–5).

22. In the *Byzantine Achilleis* we learn that the heroine's father constructed the garden specifically for her private enjoyment (cod. Neap. 709–11). That of *Belthandros and Chrysantza* II also belongs to the heroine.

23. In the Palaiologan romances the ekphrasis of the garden often merges into one of the associated buildings to form a composite setting of beauty for the girl.

her beauty. Significantly, since at this point we are a few hundred lines from the ekphrasis of the garden, a further and otherwise quite irrelevant garden is described for us. In the romances, therefore, the garden is a part, and usually the most important part, of the heroine's original and personal setting, while all settings in which she may find herself during subsequent foreign adventures are purely accidental.²⁴

What may be learned from this association? The authors of the romances are at pains to emphasize both the beauties of the gardens and the beauties of the heroines, who are, of course, *ipso facto* beautiful like princesses (in the Palaiologan examples they are indeed princesses). Through the widely held belief in the affinity of beautiful things, discussed long ago in a similar connexion by Klearchos of Soli²⁵ and probably based ultimately upon a residual attachment to sympathetic magic, the beauty of the one reflects and augments that of the other. This holds good whether the author praises the garden for natural features, as in the early romances, or more for its artificial features, as when the vegetation becomes mosaics encrusted with precious stones to represent fruits (in *Belthandros and Chrysantza* [287–291] real trees are lauded for appearing to have been turned on a lathe), and when the water supply becomes a setting for the mechanical toys that were so important a part of the technological rivalry enjoyed by the Caliphal and Imperial courts from the time of Theophilos.²⁶ We must be chary of holding technology incompatible with poetry and even with beauty – Pavlovskis'

24. Even in *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* the gardens of the Dragon's castle serve as natural settings rather for beautiful girl than for ugly monster.

25. Frag. 39 (Mueller, *F.H.G.* II, pp. 315f.) apud Athen. 12.553e–554b. Klearchos ponders why lovers carry ripe fruits and beautiful flowers: he concludes by asking, *ἢ πάντες οἱ ἐρῶντες οἶον ἐκτρύφοντες ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους καὶ ὠραινόμενοι τοῖς ὠραίοις ἀβρύνονται; φυσικὸν γὰρ δὴ τι τὸ τοὺς οἰομένους εἶναι καλοὺς καὶ ὠραίους ἀνθολογεῖν. ὅθεν αἱ τε περὶ τὴν Περσεφόνην ἀνθολογεῖν λέγονται. . . .*

26. Even earlier than Theophilos these mechanical toys appear in Nonnos (3.169–79). The palm in this respect is earned by Eustathios Makrembolites (1.5.1–8) for his fountain wherein an eagle on a shell of Thessalian marble balanced upon a pillar squirts water onto his wings, while below a goat drinks as a goatherd milks her, a hare washes his chin with a jet of water and various birds, all man-made like the other creatures, disport themselves around the pool.

recent work²⁷ is a timely reminder that the Romans did not. The authors of the romances simply reflect contemporary aesthetics.²⁸

But the association tells us more than simply that the girl is beautiful. In primitive literature the wilderness, in complete contradistinction to the city, is the seat of danger both psychic and physical; and when it is conceived as a dark, barely penetrable forest with rank undergrowth it may be the lair of the Enchantress, often a creature of unbridled and over-powering sexuality. The creation of a pleasure-garden indicated man's control over his environment, 'a reconciliation of wilderness and city'²⁹ whose natural occupant should be mysterious but not dangerous, seductive but controllable. The distinction is readily apparent in Homer, for more sophisticated literature is not immune to what becomes in time literary symbolism: the dangerous enchantress Kirke lives amid *δρυμὰ πυκνὰ* (10.150), the gentle Nausikaa enjoys a garden (7.112–32) that is the prototype of the whole tradition in the romances, while Kalypso's home (5.63–73), in full accord with her own disposition, has affinities with both Kirke's and especially Nausikaa's.

Consequently from the heroine's well-arranged, orderly and blooming garden the reader of the romances may reasonably expect a sober, amenable and nubile young lady possessed of the perfect beauty exhibited by that garden. In significant contrast the wild disorder of Aristainetos' *ἐρωτικὸς παράδεισος* (*Ep.* 1. 3), with its heavy odours, correctly foreshadows the wild and indecorous love-making of a lusty courtesan. However,

27. Z. Pavlovskis, *Man in an Artificial Landscape: the Marvels of Civilization in Imperial Roman Literature* (Mnemosyne Suppl. XXV, Leiden, 1973).

28. This is well illustrated by Schissel, op. cit. (n. 8). I know of no thorough study of the Byzantine garden, but see M. L. Gothein, *Geschichte der Gartenskunst*, I (Jena, 1926), cap. 5. Some relevant information with a bearing on Byzantium may be found in E. R. Curtis, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern, 1948), cap. 10, A. Motte, *Prairies et Jardins de la Grèce antique* (Académie Royale de Belgique, Mémoires de la Classe des Lettres LXI.5, Brussels, 1973) and *The Islamic Garden*, ed. E. B. MacDougall and R. Ettinghausen (Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, IV [Washington, D.C., 1976]).

29. Pehler, op. cit. (n. 9), p. 78. His whole section on 'The Psychology of Landscape: Wilderness and City' (pp. 72–8) is of interest here.

even gardens may exhibit variations, and our romantic heroines faithfully follow the characters of their gardens.³⁰

The description of Achilleus Tatios' principal garden is more sensual than most and contains one highly suggestive passage: ἔθαλλον οἱ κλάδοι, συνέπιπτον ἀλλήλοις ἄλλος ἐπ' ἄλλον, αἱ γείτονες τῶν πετάλων περιπλοκαί, τῶν φύλλων περιβολαί, τῶν καρπῶν συμπλοκαί . . . ἐνίοις δὲ τῶν δένδρων τῶν ἀδροτέρων κιττὸς καὶ σμίλαξ παρεπεφύκει· ἡ μὲν ἐξηρητημένη πλατάνου καὶ περιπυκάζουσα ῥαδινῇ τῇ κόμῃ· ὁ δὲ κιττὸς περὶ πεύκην εἰλιχθεὶς ῥκειοῦτο τὸ δένδρον ταῖς περιπλοκαῖς, . . . (1.15.2–3). It is therefore no surprise to find that Leukippe listens οὐκ ἀηδῶς (1.19.1) to the discourse on mutual attraction in nature and subsequently agrees to admit the hero to her chamber, where her virginity is saved only by the fortuitous irruption of her mother (2.23.3–6).

Of the romantic epics the *Dionysiaka* has an ekphrasis surprisingly sober for Nonnos, although indeed ἀρσενα φύλλα πετάσσας / θηλυτέρῳ φοίνικι πόθον πιστώσατο φοινίξ (3.142 f.). The tone is, however, highly appropriate, for when Kadmos and Harmonia depart together they preserve a very 'proper' relationship until Aphrodite and the nymphs arrange their wedding in North Africa (13.349–366). The situation is rather different in the epic of *Digenis Akritas*: there we learn that when one May, the month that ἔρωτας πνέει θαυμαστῶς, ἀφροδίτην ἐπάγει (cod. Grott. 6.9), Digenis arranged a garden he indulged himself with heavy odours,

περὶ τῆς κλίνης πέμματα ἐκάπνιζον παντοῖα·
μόσχοι, νῖται καὶ ἄμβαρα, καμφοραὶ καὶ κασσίαι·
καὶ ἦν πλείστη ἡ ἡδονὴ καὶ ὁσμὴ εὐφροσύνης·
τοσαύτην ὁ παρὰ δεισος τὴν τερπνότητα εἶχεν.
(Ibid., 38–41)

This eroticism is quite legitimate, for the garden is not the natural setting of the girl described for us on our first acquaintance with her, but the garden of a man, a hero neither bashful nor virginal, arranged for the delectation of himself and not a maiden but his wife.

30. The survey below is not complete, but correlations can also be satisfactorily made in each omitted instance.

The writers of the Komnene period afford slightly differing examples. Niketas' sedate but lovely garden is a fit setting for the comely young lady as yet a wife in name only. Eustathios' garden is more subtle and supports his rehabilitation.³¹ Its wording has slight suggestions of sensuality, e.g. αἱ μυρρίναι κατὰ στέγην ζυνηρεφεῖς· αἱ ἀμπελοι βοστρυχοῦνται τοῖς βότρυσι· τὸ ἴον προπηδᾷ τῶν φύλλων καὶ μετ' ὁδοῦς ὠραίζει τὴν ὄψιν. . . τὸ κρίον . . . ἡδύνει τὴν ὄσφρησιν, τὸν θεατὴν ἐφέλκεται καὶ πρὸς τὸ ρόδον ἐρίζει· . . . (τὰ δένδρα) ἐφαπλοῦσι τοὺς κλάδους ὡς χεῖρας καὶ ὥσπερ χορὸν ζυστησάμενα κατοροφοῦσι τὸν κῆπον. . . (1.4.1–3); six of the seven plants mentioned by Eustathios are among the nine to be honoured with erotic tales in that tenth-century compilation known as the *Geoponika*, a higher percentage than in any other romance,³² and again, although the vine frequently appears in romantic gardens, only in this one is there imbibing, frequent but not excessive, of its potent juice whose aphrodisiacal properties were appreciated by another Komnene romancer, Constantine Manasses.³³ And what of Eustathios' heroine? Her immodest behaviour causes the hero amusement and more frequently considerable embarrassment (he gives his friend a catalogue of her flirtatious antics with the culminating horror that instead of washing his feet she kissed and tickled them [1.14.1–3]); but she is no loose woman and, Hysminias safely captivated with Eros' help, turns coy and preserves her virginity to the very end.

The Palaiologan romances also exhibit variations. In the first garden of *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoë* the natural phenomena are treated very briefly:

εὐθὺς γὰρ ὡς ἐξ ἀπαρχῆς παράδεισος εὐρέθη
καρπούς καὶ ὀπώρας, χάριτας, ἄνθη καὶ φύλλα γέμων,
ἀπὸ πνοῆς τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων ἔχων,
ἐκ δὲ τῆς ὀψεως αὐτῆς μείζονα πάλιν χάριν
(282–5)

31. Most recently by Alexiou, op. cit. (n. 7).

32. Longos II happens to have all nine in its total of eighteen.

33. τοῖς γὰρ ὀργαίοις Ἔρωτος ὑπηρετεῖν τὸν οἶνον/ ἐντεῦθεν οἶνος λέγεται γάλα τῆς Ἀφροδίτης (frag. 34 Mazal). According to the prose paraphrase of Planudes, Eros chose the vine as the most beautiful of plants since wine was his ally. In marked contrast with the scenes in the romantic gardens is that in one of Alkiphron (*Ep.* 4.13) whose courtesans are greatly indebted to their potations.

As Schissel says, 'es werden also echt orientalisches die sinnlichen Freuden, die der Garten gewährte, allein gewürdigt, nicht auch die planvolle Gestaltung des Naturgegebenen, die der Antike so wichtig war'.³⁴ These sensual delights of real trees and flowers are reinforced by the garden's great glory, a magnificent and luxurious bath-house adorned with superb imitations of nature whose description is an integral part of the ekphrasis. The passionate relationship which is to develop between hero and heroine is therefore only to be expected. This sensuality is appropriately absent in *Belthandros and Chrysantza* in which the heroic pair take over two years to bring themselves to the stage of kissing. In the *Byzantine Achilleis* a sober emphasis upon visual beauty marks the ekphrasis of a garden belonging to a heroine who though beautiful is shortly in that very garden to forswear love: nevertheless there are sufficient hints (e.g. cod. Neap. 720, 723, 735) to foreshadow her subsequent and passionate change of heart.

Should we be justified in making the hazardous assumption that the garden is a symbol of the heroine?

Frequently there is interlocking wording or imagery. This may be blatant as in the *Achilleis* from which we learn that the heroine was *πάντρεπνος καὶ ὠραία* (cod. Neap. 706) and twelve lines later that she owned a garden with trees *πάντρεπνα καὶ ὠραία*,³⁵ or it may be less obvious as in Hysminias' reaction to the first words of Hysmine after his conversion, *καὶ ἦν τὸ ψιθύρισμα μεστὸν ἡδονῆς* (4.1.3) which echo his first words in praise of the garden, *ὁ δὲ μεστὸς ἦν χαρίτων καὶ ἡδονῆς* (1.4.1).³⁶ A more subtle example comes from Niketas: in his garden the just opening calyx of the rose, that is to be fully opened by the warm rays of the sun to unveil the fragrant delight therein, is compared with the bridal chamber of a girl (1.83–90),³⁷ while a

34. Op. cit. (n. 8), p. 33.

35. Cf. *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, τὰς ἡδονάς, τὰς χάριτας, τὰς καλλονάς, τὰς τέρψεις (279, of the garden) and, ἦν γὰρ ἡ κόρη πάντρεπνος, ἐρωτοφορουμένη / ἀσύγκριτος τὰς ἡδονάς, τὸ κάλλος ὑπὲρ λόγον, τὰς χάριτας ὑπὲρ αὐτὴν τὴν τῶν χαρίτων φύσιν (808–810). In the *Achilleis* the introductory words of the ekphraseis of garden and girl are very similar (cod. Neap. 716f., 798f.).

36. Similarly, though his reasons are different, Hysminias' initial reactions to the beauties of the garden and the antics of the girl are the same – speechlessness (1.7.1, 1.8.4).

37. This is a variation of the far less decorous imagery which is found in the *Pervigilium Veneris* (19–26) and enjoys its supreme glory in the intricate allegory of both Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun in *Le Roman de la Rose*.

little later we learn that Drosilla, whose lips are like the calyx of a rose (1.128) is as yet married in name only (1.221) – surely we are to understand that her husband, Charikles, like the sun, has not yet had the opportunity to enter the bridal chamber.

In all the romances the heroines, both in their formal ekphraseis and elsewhere, are adorned with vegetal imagery.³⁸ Although through the natural affinity of beautiful things this is common poetic idiom, yet the romancers reveal an exceptionally wide use of it. A fine example occurs in *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* when the heroine, caught with her old lover again, from whom she had been wrested, asks in an extended metaphor if it is fair that when one man has carefully tended the young vine its fruit should be enjoyed by another (2457–68). However, it must be remembered that even the romances in the ‘high’ language are closer to the thought and imagery of demotic than most other forms of ‘high’ literature and that when demotic compositions eventually surface in late Byzantium and after³⁹ they bear clear evidence of the influence of oriental aesthetics. Arabic literature of even the pre-Islamic era draws from the world of nature in markedly sensual manner,⁴⁰ and Persian literature builds up a huge scheme of vegetal imagery that embraces virtually every part of the human body⁴¹ while both *bāgh* and *būstān* could symbolize a woman.

38. In two instances the imagery is made expressly to vie with (Achilleus Tatios II) or outshine (*Digenis Akritas* I) its prototypes in the garden.

39. For vegetal imagery in meta-Byzantine demotic see D. Petropoulos, *La Comparaison dans la Chanson Populaire Grecque* (Collection de l’Institut Français d’Athènes, LXXXVI [Athens, 1954]), especially pp. 30–47.

40. Highly sensual imagery, both vegetal and other, is exhibited by the Mu‘allaqāt, particularly in the ode attributed to the Himyarite noble Imr-el-Kāis, ‘. . . On her shoulders fallen thick lie the locks of her, / dark as the dark date-clusters hung from the palm branches. / . . . Slim her waist, – a well-cord scarce has its slenderness. / Smooth are her legs as reed-stems stripped at a water-head. / . . . Soft her touch, – her fingers fluted as water-worms, / sleek as the snakes of Thóbya, tooth-sticks of Ishali . . .’) (A. and W. S. Blunt, *The Seven Golden Odes of Pagan Arabia* [London, 1903], pp. 5f.).

41. A mine of information is C.-H. de Fouchécour, *La Description de la Nature dans la Poésie Lyrique Persane du XI^e Siècle* (Travaux de l’Institut d’Études Iraniennes de l’Université de Paris, IV [Paris, 1969]). De Fouchécour deals principally with the three lyric poets at the Ghaznavid court of Maḥmūd in Khurasan, ‘Unṣuri, Farrukhī and Manūchihri, of whom Farrukhī has the most wide-ranging relevant examples. A convenient list of the parts of the body symbolized by plants in Persian literature is given by W. L. Hanaway, Jr,

Such imagery was, of course, known to the Byzantines also from *Canticles*, even though its female protagonist came to be identified with *Ekklesia*, and thence played a major rôle in Marian imagery (in the *chairetismoι* of the *Akathistos* Hymn, for instance, the virgin is βλαστοῦ ἀμαράντου κλῆμα, ἄνθος, δένδρον ἀγλαόκαρπον and ζύλον εὐσκιόφυλλον). In this particular regard the supplement to the more meagre classical tradition is, even during the Palaiologan period, oriental rather than occidental.⁴²

So far the evidence points to associative imagery rather than to an equation of girl and garden. Achilles Tatios' τοιοῦτος ἦν Λευκίππης ἐπὶ τῶν προσώπων ὁ λειμών (1.19.2) can be discounted as a simple summation of the catalogue of her facial charms that rival the flowers of the λειμών, but a more serious equation is suggested in the *Achilleis* by τὰ μῆλα της ἐφλέγασιν ἀπὸ ὑψηλῆς θεωρίας, / τὸ στήθος της παράδεισος ἐρωτικὸς ὑπάρχει (cod. Neap. 821 f., almost identical with *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, 714 f.), which is supported by ἀλλ' ἦτον (sc. ἡ κόρη) ὡς παράδεισος μετὰ νερῶν καὶ δένδρων a few lines later (830). We are thus entitled to take κῆπος as 'body' and read an under-lying erotic meaning in

Μετὰ τὸ φέγγος ἔρχομαι κόρη, εἰς τὸ περιβόλιν,
εὐγενική μου καὶ ζανθή, ἐξύπνησε ἄν κοιμᾶσαι,
καὶ δὸς με ἀπὲ τοῦ κήπου σου μηλεὰ νὰ τὴν τρυγήσω,
καὶ ὑπόκλινε τὴν κορυφήν, τοὺς κλάδους καὶ τὰ ἄνθη.⁴³

'Paradise on Earth', in McDougall and Ettinghausen, op. cit. (n. 28), pp. 64–7. In his essay (pp. 43–63), Hanaway translates many apposite passages, including the famous description of Rudāba, Rostam's mother, in Firdausi's *Shāh-nāma* (1.157). It is interesting to note the rôle of the garden in the romance *Varqa u Gul-shāh* of 'Ayyūqi, itself apparently dependent upon Arabic versions of the seventh to eighth centuries. A Persian MS. of the thirteenth century in Topkapı Sarayı contains an illustration of the couple in the garden (reproduced in R. Ettinghausen, M. S. Ipsiroğlu and S. Eyuboğlu, *Turkey: Ancient Miniatures* [New York Graphic Society/Unesco, 1961], plate I).

42. This is not, of course, to deny the importance of vegetal imagery in classical or in western European mediaeval poetry. It should be added that the association of moral qualities with plants, illustrated by the anonymous *opusculum* edited by M. H. Thomson (*Le Jardin Symbolique*, Paris, 1960) and paralleled in both east and west, appears to play no part in the romances.

43. 1223–1226. The metaphor of μῆλα for a girl's breasts, found also in Niketas (κὰν μῆλον οὐχ ὠριμον ἐν τῷ κηπίῳ, / τὸ στέρνον ἡμῶν ἀντὶ μῆλου

This would be quite in accord with meta-Byzantine demotic imagery. The most extended use⁴⁴ of the metaphor is again in *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoë* in which the hero, by watching the gardener watering the garden of the palace where the heroine was held as queen, ἐγνώρισεν ἀπὸ νεροῦ τὴν φλόγαν / καὶ τὸ καμίνιν καὶ τὸ πυρ καὶ τὴν τῆς κόρης φλόγαν (1621 f.). He promptly obtained the post of water-carrier, and when Chrysorrhoë had a small pavilion built in the garden they spent there many an hour of amorous pleasure enhanced by the imagery of water. Outside the romance we find that popular poetry of late or just meta-Byzantine date makes very blunt the equation that rapidly became standard:

Παράδεισος ἐγίνεσουν καὶ πεθυμῶ σε, ἀφέντρα,
νὰ πιάσω ἐκ τὰ φύλλα σου, νὰ φάγω ἐκ τὸν καρπὸν σου,
νὰ πιῶ κι ἀπὸ τὴν βρῦσιν σου, νὰ δροσιστῇ καρδιά μου.⁴⁵

Aristainetos' courtesan, mentioned earlier, who is extensively compared with the scene of her activities, is actually called *Λειμώνη*;⁴⁶ while in classical Greece, though not in polite literature, *κῆπος*, *κήπευμα* and *λειμών* are euphuisms for the *pudenda muliebria*,⁴⁷ an equation accepted by psychoanalysts.⁴⁸ Better known was *Canticles*. Now here (4.12) the female protagonist is a *κῆπος κεκλεισμένος*, an image which, with *πηγὴ ἐσφραγισμένη* becomes standard for Mary, the archetypal

προσδέχου, 4.275f.) is found first (probably as slang) in the fifth century B.C. For its use in early Byzantium see A. R. Littlewood, 'The Symbolism of the Apple in Byzantine Literature', *JÖB*, XXIII (1974), 35f.

44. Consideration should be given also to the expressions *κῆπος ὠραιότητος* and *εὐπρεπείας ἄλσος* in Manasses' romance (frag. 11) discussed by Mazal (pp. 89f.).

45. H. Pernot, *Chansons Populaires Grecques des XV^e et XVI^e Siècles* (Paris, 1931), p. 36, no. 17.

46. *Ep.* 1.3. Cf. 2.1 where he argues why a woman is like a meadow.

47. See J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (New Haven and London, 1975), pp. 20, 27, 135f., 160. For brief discussions of a garden representing a woman in Greek tragedy see C. P. Segal, 'The Tragedy of the "Hippolytus": the Waters of Ocean and the Untouched Meadow', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, LXX (1965), 124f. and n. 21, R. S. Caldwell, 'The Psychology of Aeschylus' "Supplices"', *Arethusa*, VII (1974), 59 and A. V. Rankin, 'Euripides' Hippolytus: a Psychopathological Hero', *ibid.*, 84.

48. E.g. Freud, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* (Leipzig and Vienna, 1916), cap. 10.

virgin. Does this explain the insistent emphasis in the romances upon walls or hedges? They are often vouchsafed excessive attention; they exist even for the flowery meadows unattached to a building (Achilleus Tatios I, Niketas); apart from the island in *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* II, whose barrier of water is an adequate alternative, only Digenis Akritas' meadow does not have one,⁴⁹ and his wife was no virgin. Walls were certainly built to protect princesses from unwelcome attentions,⁵⁰ but how often is the wall used as a symbol? It certainly is in the Marian imagery; the virginal symposiasts of Methodios' famous work discourse within an enclosed garden and their subject is virginity; an enclosed garden is the setting in that monstrous work of Meliteniotes entitled *Sophrosyne*.⁵¹ It may be significant that when once the hero has managed to penetrate the garden, not necessarily a mean feat in the Palaiologan romances, he enjoys perfect compliance from the heroine, whatever other obstacles may be placed in their path, as if her virginity has been symbolically surrendered.

Should we be justified in making our assumption? It may be safer to conclude that the walled garden could well have been intended consciously as a symbol of a virgin in the *Achilleis*, if not in the other Palaiologan romances, whereas in the earlier works it was probably an instinctive and unconscious association.

49. The flowery meadow in which Libistros met the Erotes is also lacking a wall, but it may be doubted if this 'garden' really symbolizes Rhodamne who does have another behind the wall of her father's castle. In the Palaiologan romances the wall sometimes belongs more properly to the castle than to the garden inside (a second wall is specifically mentioned in the *Archilleis*).

50. In 1250 Henry III of England instructed his bailiff at Woodstock 'to make around about the garden of our Queen two walls, good and high, so that no one may be able to enter' (quoted by Piehler, op. cit., p. 100).

51. Ed. B. E. C. Miller in *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Impériale*, XIX/2 (Paris, 1862), pp. 1–138. An early demotic poem reads in part, σὰν βρύση εἶν τὰ κάλλη σου, σὰν μῆλο εἰς περιβόλι· / τὰ ἔμορφά σου τὰ μαλλιά φραγμός σὸδ περιβόλι / κι ὁποῦ πατήση τὸν φραγμόν, ἄς σέβῃ εἰς περιβόλι, / κι ἄς πέση νάποκοιμηθῇ εἰς ἔμορφες ἀγκάλες, / κι ἄς θυμηθῇ παράδεισον, παράδη καὶ νὰ τοῦ ἔλθῃ (Pernot, op. cit., pp. 35f., no. 16). In Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale* the aged knight Januarie married a very young girl, 'His fresshe May, his paradys' (578), for whom 'He made a gardin, walled al with stoon' (785) to which he alone had the key, 'And thinges whiche that were nat doon a-bedde, / He in the gardin parfourned hem and spedde' (807f.). Here, of course, the walled garden represents not a virgin but a wedded wife accessible only to her husband who has the key. Unfortunately somebody else made a second key.

Even a cursory glance reveals close affinities between the romantic descriptions and those of the abode of the pious dead, whether that be Elysion or the Orphico-Pythagorean or Christian paradise, that are themselves influenced by descriptions of the Golden Age.⁵² St. Basil made some use of the paradisiacal tradition to indicate the nature of his own rural retreat (*Ep.* 14 to Gregory of Nazianzos), and Ioannes Geometres, in the tenth century, did so more extensively in two letters that convey the delights of his own garden on the *Mese Odos* in the very heart of Constantinople (*Progymnasmata*, 2f., ed. Littlewood). In the East real gardens were deliberately modelled upon human concepts of Paradise: from the pre-Islamic era we learn of the impious attempt by King Shaddād of South Arabia to rival Paradise by constructing his *Garden of Iram* which won the immortality of condemnation in the Qur'ān (sura 89) and the honour of eponymous imitation in the Qavām family's Bāgh-i Iram that may still be enjoyed in Shiraz; while in Delhi the Mughals actually dared to inscribe upon the Audience Hall that was surrounded by gardens, 'If there is a Paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here'. In view of this, how much more natural is it that the fictional gardens of the romances should be described in terms of a divine paradise. The connexion is made explicit in two: Hysmine's garden is compared with Elysion and Phaiakia (1.4.3) and Digenis Akritas plants a pleasant paradise on the banks of the Euphrates that takes its source *ἐξ αὐτοῦ μεγάλου παραδείσου*.⁵³ To find the divine in the service of love should not be surprising, since one is generally regarded as the sublimation of the other. Moreover, the connexion is strong in the East⁵⁴ and later in the West,⁵⁵ and writers of Byzantine romances had biblical precedents in the covert eroticism of *Genesis* and the overt eroticism of *Canticles* and an Homeric

52. An interesting example is the parody of Elysion in Lucian, *Vera Historia*, 2. 4–16.

53. See also *Libistros and Rhodamne* cod. Neap. 199–201 compared with cod. Esc. 183–5.

54. See Hanaway, *op. cit.*, and the preceding study in that same volume by A. Schimmel, 'The Celestial Garden', pp. 13–39.

55. This has been extensively documented: see Piehler, *op. cit.*, *passim* and H. R. Patch, *The Other World according to Descriptions in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1950), especially chapter 7 on western romances, and the bibliography.

precedent in the ever remembered demesne of Alkinoos, whose context at least has erotic undertones, not to mention Homer's Ogygia and Aiaia and the later pastoral Arkady, all of which are not strictly 'of this world'. The two traditions, that of the heavenly and that of the terrestrial paradise, regularly irrigate each other.⁵⁶

Is this association of any significance? Since heavenly paradises, though inaccessible to living mortals for all their essentially terrestrial features, are peopled by the beauteous, the care-free and the peaceable under divine blessing, may therefore the natural inhabitant of the romantic garden, that is the heroine, be considered to take on some of the attributes of the inhabitants of the heavenly – being beautiful, care-free, peaceable, inaccessible to ordinary mortals and often under divine care? The basic theme of the escapism which is the romances is simply that with the readers's suspension of his critical faculties a mortal should have with divine aid the luck to obtain such a marvel of a girl, being, of course, worthy himself and of like character and disposition (there must be escapism for the female reader too); and that they should both through their tribulations ultimately earn the right to a life of perpetually blissful and harmonious union (we need not accept all of Merkelbach's theories to see religious and even mystical content in the romances). It is perhaps more than coincidental that the classical romance loses the adherence of the populace at the time of the rise of the Saint's Life, a genre that retains many of the exciting elements of the romance and whose theme is the deserving man's struggle for union with his beloved – God. In the twelfth century the hagiographic novel seems largely to disappear; and it is followed by a renewal of interest in the romances that had lain dormant through the saints' hegemony, first in the Komnene era among a literary coterie and subsequently in the Palaiologan era among the general populace.⁵⁷ One Byzantine at least understood this association:

56. The primary distinction is the emphasis upon the lustrous quality of the air in the former (remarkably this comes even in Geometres' description of his own garden [*Prog.* 3., pp. 10.28–11.1]).

57. The relationship between Saint's Life and Romance was illustrated by H.-G. Beck in a paper 'Marginalia on the Byzantine Novel' delivered to the International Conference on the Ancient Novel (résumé in *Erotica Antiqua* [Bangor, 1977], pp. 59–65).

there is a poem by Manuel Philes that summarizes an earlier version of the romance of *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* and adds a mystical interpretation – just as the hero overcomes the dragon and is united with the girl, so the Christian who has overcome Satan will be united with God.⁵⁸

The garden is not an intrusive and irrelevant feature of the romances. With varying degrees of consciousness on the part of the authors it has a dominant rôle to play. It lends erotic undertones; it enhances the heroine's beauty; while emphasizing her virginity it yet mirrors her moral standards; it helps readers to forget their shortcomings and daily worries and to identify themselves with a hero and heroine who overcome all the desperate trials of human existence to enjoy a deserved, eternal and blessedly felicitous union.

APPENDIX⁵⁹

ACHILLEUS TATIOS, *LEUKIPPE AND KLEITOPHON* I (1.1.2–13): The narrator opens the romance by describing a painting of the rape of Europa in which the bull is already swimming away with the maid from her bevy of companions who are standing at the edge of a luxuriant, enclosed meadow in which, presumably, all the girls have been recently disporting. The action and the scene of the meadow, foreshadowing the early stages of the plot proper, set the tone for the erotic preoccupation of the whole romance,⁶⁰ which is in marked contrast with those of Achilles' predecessors Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesos, and also of Heliodoros, in none of which

58. Published by S. C. E. Martini, 'A Proposito d'una poesia inedita di Manuel File', *Rendiconti del R. Istituto Lombardo*, Ser. 2, XXIX (Milano, 1896), 465–9. Both summary and mystical allegory, considerably more complex than indicated above, are compared with the existing romance by M. Pichard, *Le Roman de Callimaque et de Chrysorrhoe* (Paris, 1956), pp. xvi–xxiii. According to Philes the author of the romance as known to him was Andronikos Komnenos (nephew of Michael VIII Palaiologos).

59. Although line numbers are given in this appendix, it is not always clear in the Palaiologan romances where the ekphrasis of the garden should end, since it tends to merge into ekphraseis of buildings which sometimes may be 'garden-buildings' and sometimes buildings to which the garden is attached.

60. At 1.2.1 Achilles bluntly indicates the erotic import of the painting, and at 1.4.3. directly compares Leukippe with Europa.

appears any such ekphrasis. II (1.15): A garden described with notable sensuality is the scene for Kleitophon's first words of love to Leukippe, a discourse on examples from nature of mutual attraction drawn first from the garden and then from further afield. Leukippe is finally compared with the garden in beauty, to the detriment of neither.

LONGOS, *DAPHNIS AND CHLOË* I (2.3–6): The aged Philetas describes to Daphnis and Chloë his own garden in which Eros (making his first appearance in the novel) has just declared that he is the guardian of the young couple, to bring whom together is the god's daily care before he can repair to enjoy the garden's delights. It must be remembered that the whole romance is suffused with 'a religion of nature, which itself comprehends the concept of love, indeed is identical with it',⁶¹ and that the garden serves as a purified microcosm of nature.⁶² II (4.2–4): A garden sacred to Dionysos that belongs to Daphnis' foster-father and that contains a fountain named for Daphnis subsequently suffers at the hands of his jealous rival who thereby vainly attempts to harm Daphnis' chances of marrying Chloë. The remarks about the former garden apply equally to this one, and in addition 'it is quite clear that the garden is used openly to symbolize the rise and fall of the lovers' prospects'.⁶³

NONNOS, *DIONYSIAKA* (3.140–179): At the behest of Aphrodite, Peitho, 'the nurse of Cupids who delights in marriage', guides Kadmos to the palace of Emathion so that the divine plan for his union with Harmonia may be accomplished. Significantly Peitho abruptly disappears, her nuptial mission manifestly deemed accomplished, the moment that she has pointed to the castle and its sensually described garden upon which Kadmos is left to gaze.

BASIL DIGENIS AKRITAS I (cod. Grott. 6.15–41):⁶⁴ In the month of May Basil arranges a meadow with all manner of plants for the delectation of himself and his wife. This is the setting in which he grapples with serpent, lion and robbers to rescue her from respectively seduction, attack and rape, exploits that interrupt his sleep and their mutual love-song. II (cod.

61. B. P. Reardon, 'The Greek Novel', *Phoenix*, XXIII (1969), 301.

62. See further Forehand, op. cit. (n. 6), p. 105.

63. Ibid., p. 108.

64. For references to other versions see Mavrogordato's concordance.

Grott. 7.13–108): The first element constructed and described of Basil's new dwelling by the Euphrates is a garden. Of the whole series it has the most tenuous connexion with the heroine; however, there are erotic undertones to the description (e.g. 18–22) and we learn that after dinner, which he is wont to bring to a conclusion with his lute as he delights in her sweet singing and sinuous dancing, *προσῆκον / τῶν ἡδέων ἐτρέφοντο, εἶτα πρὸς τὸν λειμῶνα / τὸν δηλωθέντα ἄνωθεν ὠραίου παραδείσου / σφόδρα ἀγαλλιώμενοι, Θεῷ εὐχαριστοῦντες . . .* (174–177).

EUSTATHIOS MAKREMBOLITES, *HYSMINE AND HYSMINIAS* (1.4–6, 2.1–11, 3.8, 4.4–20):⁶⁵ This garden is of primary importance in the first five books while the scene remains at Aulikomis. It is in the garden of her father's house that Hysminias first catches sight of Hysmine, is on two occasions embarrassed by her immodest overtures and finds the pavilion decorated with a painting of Eros who in a dream bullies him into loving her. It is again in this garden that he defends to his friend his new-found enslavement, first responds to her advances at a banquet, discovers her alone by day, discovers her alone by night and dreams of enjoying her but of being caught *in flagrante* by her enraged mother. Finally, after all their adventures, the moment that they reach Aulikomis again *θύομεν τοὺς γάμους πολυτελῶς ἐν μέσῳ τῷ τοῦ Σωσθένους κήπῳ, ἐν ἐκείνῃ πολυτελεῖ τραπέζῃ καὶ φρέατι, οἷς πρῶτον ἐρωτικὴν παστάδα κατεπηξάμεθα* (11.18.2).

NIKETAS EUGENIANOS, *DROSILLA AND CHARIKLES* (1.77–115): Amid rapine, slaughter and destruction, hero and heroine are first presented to us as captives in a plain that embraces a beauteous, enclosed meadow sacred to Dionysos in which Drosilla was attending a festival. The ekphrasis is promptly followed by one of the heroine herself.

CONSTANTINE MANASSES, *ARISTANDROS AND KALLITHEA*: The fragmentary remains include no ekphrasis of a garden, but one passage (frag. 21 Mazal) on mutual attraction in nature closely imitates a section of the discourse on this subject that Achilleus Tatios' hero delivers in a garden

65. These are the principal descriptions of the oft-recurring garden. An accurate and clear summary of the romance is given by Alexiou, *op. cit.* (n. 7), pp. 26–9.

immediately after its lengthy ekphrasis (the same theme does, however, occur also in Niketas Eugenianos [4.135–148] in a different setting). On a further fragment of Manasses involving the garden as an image of beauty see above, n. 44.

KALLIMACHOS AND CHRYSORRHOË I (274–354): The hero is first rewarded for scaling the precipitous mountain on which is perched the Castle of the Dragon with a view of a beautiful garden that he crosses in his rescue of the heroine. II (831–840): Since the heroine is discovered in pitiable condition the ekphrasis of her beauty is delayed until she has recovered. This is immediately followed by a very short ekphrasis of another garden (technically an island). III (1613–2483): Most of the action of the last third of the romance takes place in a garden (belonging to the palace of the anonymous king who has captured Chrysorrhoë). It does not enjoy a separate ekphrasis, but in no other romance is there so sustained and so manifestly sexual imagery drawn from a garden.

BELTHANDROS AND CHRYSANTZA I (282–313): This garden, belonging to the Castle of Eros, contains numerous broad and graphic hints to the hero that he is to love the heroine. II (832–1044): Since Belthandros saw Chrysantza only by magic in the Castle of Eros, he has to find her again in her father's castle at Antioch. There they exchange their first kisses and enjoy their first night together in another garden that belongs specifically to her. This garden again has no formal ekphrasis.

LIBISTROS AND RHODAMNE I (cod. Esc. 174–225, cod. Neap. 190–270, cod. Par. 2616–2693): The hero dreams that in a flowery meadow he is attacked by archers (Erotes) who force him to become a slave of love. II (cod. Esc. 246–294, cod. Par. 2722–2763): The Erotes conduct the hero to the garden of Eros where he gazes at significant works of art. This garden is attached to the palace of Eros to which the hero then proceeds, there to crave forgiveness of Eros himself for his past scorn of love and to be ordered to entertain a passion for the heroine. III (cod. Scal. 1312–1369, cod. Esc. 2448–2510, cod. Neap. 2149–2201, cod. Par. 2722–2763): A third garden, this time in the castle (Argyrokastron) of the heroine's father, contains a statue whose inscription foretells joy, two years of hardships and final, unexpected reunion for the now married couple.

BYZANTINE ACHILLEÏS (cod. Neap. 709–794, cod. Lond.

486–432):⁶⁶ During a siege Achilles falls in love upon a far-off glimpse of the lovely princess, whose own private and enclosed garden is later the scene for both her renunciation of love and Eros' epiphany in the form of a bird to change her scorn for Achilles to love, for her love-song (itself full of garden-imagery), and for the heroic couple's love-making. The actual ekphrasis of the garden is followed directly by one of the princess (in this and in subsequent scenes the imagery of the garden is outshone only by that of *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*).

66. In the abbreviated version preserved in the Oxford MS. there is reference to the garden, but no formal ekphrasis.

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